

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 08235 01 OF 02 011723Z

46

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 SR-02 ORM-03 IO-14 AID-20 OMB-01

SAM-01 SAB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DRC-01 /159 W

----- 098156

R 011712Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1722

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 08235

BEIRUT ALSO REPEAT DAMASCUS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, SY

SUBJECT: NEWS STORY ON JEWS WHO FLED DAMASCUS

1. DAILY TELEGRAPH JULY 1 CARRIES FOLLOWING STORY FILED BY MICHAEL FIELD IN PARIS ENTITLED "SECRET AGENTS HELP SYRIA JEWS TO FLEE." IT DESCRIBES SECRET OPERATION IN WHICH 92 MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE FLOWN FROM LEBANON TO SAFETY IN THE WEST. IT SAYS AMERICAN AND LEBANESE INTELLIGENCE AGENTS COOPERATED IN ENABLING JEWS TO LEAVE BEIRUT WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, POLICE OR SECURITY DEPARTMENTS. FULL TEXT OF REMAINDER OF ARTICLE FOLLOWS. WE ARE SENDING THIS CLASSIFIED IN ORDER TO GIVE IT NO WIDER DISTRIBUTION THAN IT WOULD NORMALLY GET. ADDRESSEE POSTS DECONTROL AT WILL.

2. "THE REFUGEES HAD ESCAPED IN ONES OR TWOS OR FAMILY GROUPS FROM DAMASCUS WHERE THE 4,000-STRONG JEWISH COM-
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PAGE 02 LONDON 08235 01 OF 02 011723Z

MUNITY IS SEVERELY HARASSED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

3. "THE JEWS WHO ESCAPED WERE ABLE TO TAKE LITTLE WITH THEM AS ATTEMPTS TO SELL HOMES OR BUSINESSES WOULD HAVE BEEN INVESTIGATED.

4. "BY THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR 92 SYRIAN JEWS WERE SAFELY IN NEIGHBORING LEBANON, WHICH HAS A LONG TRADITION OF HOSPITALITY TO REFUGEES OF ALL KINDS, AND A JEWISH COMMUNITY OF 2,000.

5. "BUT LEBANON ALSO HAS THOUSANDS OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, AMONG THEM THE MEMBERS OF GUERRILLA GROUPS. SO THE JEWS DETERMINED TO MOVE ON.

6. "SOME WERE HIDING IN CAVES, OTHERS WERE CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE. THEY COULD NOT GET RESIDENCE PERMITS OR PERMISSION TO WORK.

7. "OFTEN HUNGRY AND CONSTANTLY FEARFUL, THEY FINALLY MADE CONTACT WITH AMERICAN UNDER-COVER MEN THROUGH A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE LEBANESE JEWISH COMMUNITY, AND THE FREEDOM FLIGHT WAS ARRANGED.

8. "THE 92 MADE THEIR WAY TO A HOUSE NORTH OF BEIRUT, WHERE THEIR IDENTITIES WERE CHECKED BY LEADERS OF THE COMMUNITY. A RABBI, ASKED TO GO TO BEIRUT AIRPORT TO SEE NO IMPOSTERS INFILTRATED THE PARTY, REFUSED TO DO SO BECAUSE, HE SAID, IT WOULD BE TOO DANGEROUS.

9. "SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT A LARGE REFRIGERATED VAN WAS DRIVEN INTO THE COURTYARD OF THE HOUSE, AND THE REFUGEES PACKED ABOARD. THEN CAME THE MOST HAZARDOUS PART OF THE WHOLE TRIP--THE JOURNEY TO THE AIRPORT PAST THREE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS.

10. "PALESTINIAN GUERRILLAS WERE IN CONTROL OF THE CAMPS, AND IF ANYTHING HAD LEAKED OUT ABOUT THE OPERATION, MIGHT HAVE STOPPED THE VAN. THE 92 JEWS WOULD HAVE BEEN HOSTAGES THE WORLD COULD NOT HAVE IGNORED.

11. "FOR THIS REASON, THE VAN DRIVER, AN OFFICER OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 08235 01 OF 02 011723Z

LEBANESE ARMY CARRIED A SUBMACHINE GUN. ON EACH SIDE OF THE REAR DOORS, TWO WESTERN SECURITY MEN STOOD WITH THEIR FINGERS ON THE TRIGGERS OF THEIR SUBMACHINE GUNS.

12. "AT BEIRUT AIRPORT, THE CHARTER PLANE WHICH WAS TO TAKE THE JEWS TO PARIS WAS SURROUNDED BY MORE THAN 100 LEBANESE ARMY SECURITY MEN IN PLAIN CLOTHES AS SOON AS IT LANDED. THE ARMY MEN SENT THE UNIFORMED AIR FORCE GUARDS

AWAY, WAVING THEIR IDENTITY PASSES AND THEIR GUNS AS EVIDENCE OF AUTHORITY.

13. "THE VAN WHICH HAD DRIVEN WITH LIGHTS OUT THROUGH THE MOST DANGEROUS AREAS, WITH CAR LOADS OF SECURITY MEN IN FRONT AND BEHIND, BACKED UP TO THE PLANE, AND THE JEWS WERE BUNDLED ABOARD.

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PAGE 01 LONDON 08235 02 OF 02 011722Z

46

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BEIRUT PASS DAMASCUS

14. "WITHIN MINUTES OF THE TRUCK'S ARRIVAL, THE PLANE WAS AIRBORNE, BOUND FOR FRANCE.

15. "SINCE THEN, MOST OF THOSE WHO ESCAPED HAVE MOVED ON TO OTHER COUNTRIES, THOUGH A FEW REMAINED IN FRANCE. THEY AGREED TO TELL THEIR STORY ONLY IF MANY DETAILS WERE OMITTED, AS THEY STILL HOPE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR MANY OF THE JEWS STILL IN DAMASCUS TO ESCAPE.

16. "THEY BELIEVE THAT THE NEW SPIRIT IN THE MIDDLE EAST MAY SOON MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE JEWS TO LEAVE SYRIA OPENLY. BUT IN CASE THAT DOES NOT HAPPEN, THEY ARE KEEP-
ING SECRET THEIR ESCAPE ROUTES AND DETAILS OF HOW THEIR FLIGHT TO FREEDOM WAS ARRANGED.

17. "AT PRESENT JEWS IN DAMASCUS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO MOVE MORE THAN THREE MILES FROM THEIR GHETTO AT THE SIDE OF
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PAGE 02 LONDON 08235 02 OF 02 011722Z

THE STREET CALLED STRAIGHT.

18. "BEFORE THE OCTOBER WAR, WHEN SYRIAN-ISRAELI ANTAGONISM WAS AT ITS HEIGHT, THE JEWS ALSO LIVED IN CONSTANT
FEAR OF IMPRISONMENT OR PHYSICAL ATTACKS."

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